Genus CINCLUS.

Gen. Char. Beak slender, slightly bent upwards, compressed, cutting edges bending inwards; upper mandible notched at the tip. Nostrils at the sides of the base, naked, cleft lengthwise, partly covered by a membrane. Legs short; toes three before, one behind, the outer toe joined at its base to the middle one. Wings short; the first quill not half the length of the second, which is also shorter than the third and fourth.

WATER OUZEL.

Cinclus aquaticus, Bechst.

Le Cincle plongeur.

The genus Cinclus, as far as our knowledge at present extends, is very limited, including only three species, of which one is a native of the Himalayan mountains, another of Mexico, and the third (the subject now under consideration,) is peculiar, we believe, to Europe, where it is dispersed among the mountainous districts of the Continent and also of our own island.

The lonely, secluded, and indeed local situations in which this bird resides, have prevented our becoming familiar with its habits and manners, which, from their extraordinary and novel character, merit a more strict attention than they have hitherto received. We here allude to the power which the Water Ouzel possesses of diving and remaining submersed beneath the water while in search of food,—habits which, though they have generally attracted the notice of naturalists, have not received that close and philosophical scrutiny which the subject deserves; and we would recommend, to those who have the opportunity, a close study of this bird in a state of nature; for, however unqualified it may appear to be for such habits, it is undoubtedly capable of descending to the bottom of streams and rivers, for the purpose of prosecuting its search after insects and larvæ which are the inhabitants of the stony bottoms of mountain streams.

As far as the fact of its submersion goes, we have ourselves many times witnessed it; but have never been able to mark unobserved the actions of the bird under water, so as to say whether it is by a powerful effort that it keeps itself submersed, or whether it is completely at its ease as some have asserted.

The Water Ouzel is a spirited and restless little bird, full of life and activity, flitting from stone to stone along the borders of streams; and it is especially fond of perching upon any rock that happens to be elevated in the centre of the current, where, conspicuous by its white breast, it may be observed dipping its head and jerking its tail in a manner not unlike that of the Wren, at one moment pouring forth a lively twittering song, (and that even in the depth of winter, when the earth is covered with snow,) and at the next diving down, and rising again at a considerable distance. When so disposed, its flight is straight, low and rapid,—in fact, much like the Kingfisher, and it is equally solitary in its habits. It is, however, seldom found in the same situations as the Kingfisher, the latter being a frequenter of streams which flow through a fertile country, while the Water Ouzel is peculiar to the rapid and limpid streams which descend the mountain sides, and run through glens at their base.

This interesting little bird builds its nest in the fissures of the rough stones and ridges which are common in such localities, and among the large loose stones of the margin. The nest is ably constructed of the various mosses and grasses nearest to hand, and covered with a dome, like that of the Wren: the eggs are from five to seven in number, of a pure and delicate white. The birds having arrived at maturity, neither undergo any peculiar changes in the plumage, nor exhibit external sexual differences. The young, however, are more brown on the upper surface, and the white extends over the whole of the abdomen, interrupted by little markings of brown, which become darker as they proceed.

In our islands we must look for the Water Ouzel in Wales (where we had the pleasure of obtaining the individuals from which the figures in the accompanying Plate were taken), Derbyshire, Yorkshire, and all the northern hilly counties. On the Continent it is extensively spread among the alpine and mountainous districts from Russia to Italy.

The upper surface is of a strong blackish brown, each feather having its outer edge black; the throat and chest are pure white; the abdomen rufous; the beak black; irides hazel.

THE RESIDENCE OF THE PARTY OF T

Our Plate represents an adult, and a young bird of the year, of the natural size.